

Amherst Conservation Commission Minutes Approved

Amherst Town Hall – July 10, 2011

DRAFT

Meeting called to order at 7:16 PM by Bill Wichman

Attendance: Bill Wichman, Rich Hart, Jack Gleason, Anne Krantz, Alternates Bruce Beckley, Lee Gilman,

Minutes: Minutes from June approved as corrected. Jack pointed out that only the 'finding portion of the letter to Walnut Hill Farm from the NH Dept of Ag was excerpted in the June minutes. Lee noted that the goal of the Invasives ROW effort is suppression, not eradication.

Treasurer – Bill

Land	\$302,314.09	
Gift	\$9,844.33	
Budget	(2,707.00)	Report accepted

Map 24, Lot 66 Baboosic Lake D&F

Minimum Impact Expedited Dredge & Fill Permit Application–Merrimack side. Owner Deb Denoncourt.

Tim Ferwerda, Meridian Land Services presented a plan to repair an existing retaining wall separating the beach from the lawn area. Bruce moved that ACC approve with no comment; Jack 2nd. Approved. Bill signed the 5 copies.

Correspondence

Copy of a new **application for affordable (Work Force) 18 unit housing proposal** for Limbo Land across from the Meeting Place. Denied by PB on first review, so this must be different although changes were not apparent. The acreage was not obvious – 10-11 acres??? ACC noted several wetland buffer encroachments that are of concern - more details needed. Noted as comments on plan.

Intent to Cut notice for 6 Town Farm Road 7,000 Board Feet of white pine; 200 tons of chips.

Planning Board – Rich

A discussion of the difference between tree trimming and tree cutting after confusion on Mack Hill Road, a scenic Rd.

Non-residential Site Plan reviews

- a. Border of Hollis – small landscaping business approved
- b. LaBelle Winery Proposal on Rt. 101 abutting the ACC sledding Hill – Rich showed the elevations and plans for the large building that will provide seating for 200 for functions (weddings). The plan was approved with a few conditions: 1. to have a parking plan that will assure that traffic is not backed up in the driveway back onto the highway. 2. to get the septic

tank contents tested whenever it is pumped and send the results to Charlie, to assure that they are not pumping bad stuff into the aquifer.

Meadow Management – Jack reported:

1. Walnut Hill Farm – the manure has been removed from the premises
2. The Martin Farm has been sold and the new owners want Steve Blais to continue to farm it as he has been doing, which makes his future more secure.
3. The corn on the Scott land (Pomeroy Farms) looks great.
4. Steve Blais mowed the Bragdon fields and the hay quality has improved. Jack will get another soil test to see if the potassium has continued to go up with the wood ash applications. Steve will apply urea this summer.
5. The field improvement grant for Joppa included \$600 for continued work on the edges –Jack would like to finish clearing out the lower margin and the portion of the field that we didn't get to when clearing 2 summers ago. Perhaps 2 days work. Jack and Lee will inspect and present a plan at the August meeting.
6. Beavers on Joppa pond – the Beaver Deceiver seems to be working.

Invasives on Bragdon hay field – Lee noted that we need to follow up after last fall's effort to clear the margins – He and Jack will also present recommendations for this work at the August meeting. Lee asked about interest in rescuing the old ski hill now covered with autumn olive. He could winch the brush down the hill and chip it at the bottom so it could be replanted with white pine – no decision.

He will do a close inspection the results of the invasive treatment of the bittersweet on upper Bragdon to see what follow up treatment is needed. The very tall vines were out of range of the spray treatment, so it was anticipated that they would need to be cut and stump treated as Phase II.

Dacquino Forest - Bill received a call from Charlie Koch who noticed that from the highway trees looked bad. He and Bill walked the property and discovered a lot of storm damage, but the trees are in good health. Charlie recommends that the 8-10 acre section be thinned. Anne moved and Bruce 2nd that Charlie mark trees for thinning, and that the lumber be cut and sold. Approved.

Roadside Invasive Project – Lee

Needs to submit the permit request for the roadside treatment this month. Anne will compile the list; Bill will help with map locations. Rich will check with Charlie about the various road ROW widths in town; also Public Works.

Round Table –

Bruce moved that his correspondence with the Bedford Conservation Commission regarding the maintenance of the north Joppa Fields be added to the ACC minutes. 2nd by Bill. Discussion of the content of the email that summarized the agreement with

Bedford for Amherst to mow all the fields this summer; Lee noted that a long-range plan is needed. Question moved: motion passed. Email follows below, and meeting minutes attached.

Subject:Joint Meeting on JHF

Date:Fri, 24 Jun 2011 08:04:44 -0400

From:Bruce B. Beckley <bbbeckley@aol.com>

To:marcoux@bedfordnh.org, kelmer@ci.bedford.nh.us, michaeljscanlon@comcast.net

CC:pappamerv@comcast.net, jonesbeale@comcast.net, wichman2@juno.com,
john.harvey@msius.com

Greetings Russ,

Thank you for including us (the ACC) in last evening's meeting. It is always good to know what is happening around us and particularly that we share the same goals and management objectives. My understanding is that the Amherst Conservation Commission will include the Bedford portion of the north field at Joppa Hill Farm in the ACC brush hogging schedule when we are hogging the Amherst portions. This to be done at no expense to the Farm or Town. Any vegetation such as autumn olive or pine trees in the Bedford field too large for the mower to ride over will be left for other parties to deal with. **The ACC schedules its field maintenance activities to accommodate ground-nesting birds and where these fields are so heavily grown with milkweed, the monarch butterfly.**

To facilitate access for field maintenance equipment, Bedford agrees to let the ACC install its padlock in series with the Farm's lock on the north access point where a cable closes the entry. Bedford will also consider the replacement of the boulders in the farm lane leading down to the north fields with another cable (with keyed-alike locks) or the boulders removal. Please let me know if there are other questions or ways we can help.

Peace, Bruce

Bill – the hole at the Woolsey property has been covered with a huge rock

Anne – The Invasives Program by Doug Cygan was rescheduled for this Wed., July 13 at 6:45 at the Library – please come and bring friends.

Rich – the 4th of July booth was a success; 2-sided display on frame/rack that Bruce provided; ACC display on one side with trail information and Walk Books, and display of common invasive plants on other side. Thanks to all who helped.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Krantz, secretary

Meeting minutes:

Joppa Hill Farm - Hayfields Maintenance Meeting Minutes

June 23, 2011

Present: Russ Marcoux, Town Manager; Merv Taub, Chairman Conservation Commission; Bob Jones, Bedford Land Trust; Michael Scanlon, Education Farm at Joppa Hill; Bill Quinn, Esq., Education Farm at Joppa Hill; Bruce Beckley, Amherst Conservation Commission; Bill Wichman, Amherst Conservation Commission and Karin Elmer, Planner, Town of Bedford.

The meeting was brought to order by Russ Marcoux. This meeting is the result of questions being raised about the hayfields at Joppa Hill. It was brought to the attention of the Conservation Commission by Jack Gleason of Amherst that perhaps our fields were not being maintained in good health.

To put this discussion in some perspective the Joppa Hill was divided into different categories. Original Purchase – 300 acres. 120 acres to the Town of Amherst. 10 acres to the Park and Rec Department. 35 acres for the Educational Farm. 60 acres woods and old fields. 75 acres of hay fields. This discussion will focus on the 75 Acres of Hay Fields.

Merv Taub read from pg 15 of the Land Management Plan regarding the maintenance of the fields. Mr. Marcoux asked who was currently taking care of the fields.

Mr. Scanlon said the farm was. Section 3A of lease states the farm shall maintain “the fields”. Mr. Marcoux said you lease was only for the 35 acres. Mr. Scanlon pointed to the Town Council minutes of 5/22/02 which states the farm will continue to cut grass.

Mr. Marcoux stated that the minutes refer to “the property”. How do you define “the property”?

Mr. Scanlon said the farm has been haying the fields for 8 years. We will not concede that we don’t have the right to hay the fields. Mr. Quinn said it was the intent for the farm to hay the fields as has been the case for 8 years.

Mr. Taub reminded the group again of the land management plan.

Mr. Scanlon stated the farm is not obligated to follow the land management plan as it was written and adopted after the lease to the farm was written.

Mr. Jones stated it is the highest interest of the Bedford Land Trust, who holds the easement, to make sure it is being maintained. Mr. Quinn said you cannot enforce the land management plan on the farm. However, the farm will do it’s best to maintain the property.

Mrs. Elmer explained that this all came about because Mr. Gleason from the Amherst Conservation Commission asked to talk to the Bedford Conservation Commission regarding the importance of maintaining hay fields, especially those at Joppa Hill.

Mr. Quinn said we don’t know if the fields have been fertilized. We need to take a closer look at the current state of the fields.

Mr. Taub said it should be an open bid process. Mr. Scanlon stated that the farm rejected Mr. Blais bid and hired their current man instead.

Mr. Quinn stated it sounds like there should be a communication process adopted. Mr. Scanlon said the farmer, Paul Welch is supposed to fertilize with wood ash. He provides the farm with whatever amount they need and he keeps the rest. There is no written

contract, just a verbal agreement. It has worked for the past 3 years. Ms. Elmer stated is not working because he has not put the wood ash on the fields.

Mr. Jones said we should be able to compare our field with other well maintained fields. Mr. Scanlon said Coop – Ext in Milford has been very helpful and could probably get us the information we need.

Mr. Taub stated that the fields need to be pushed back, brush hogged. Mr. Scanlon said he would be happy to do so.

Mr. Beckley said there is a pie shaped piece of land, the north field at Joppa Hill Farm that is currently not being maintained either. It is a continuation of the field on the Amherst side. There are currently cross easement with Amherst on the lot. There are more invasive species moving in. Two people with chainsaws could clear this up in a morning.

Mr. Wichman said the main work will be cutting back the tree line. Mr. Taub you need to keep pushing back the forest in order to maintain the fields.

Mr. Scanlon mentioned there is also the small field behind the houses on No. Amherst Rd. One of the property owners gives us permission to cross their land to reach the field.

Mrs. Elmer thinks it would be a good idea to get a permanent easement or license to keep crossing their land in case they sell and the new owners aren't as agreeable.

Mr. Scanlon stated he just mowed down to the field. It is OK with the Farm if Amherst wants to maintain this portion since it is very difficult to access it. There are stones that would have to be moved and a new gate installed.

Mr. Marcoux said it seems we are going to need a written agreement with Mr. Welch for the hay.

Mr. Taub and Mr. Scanlon talked about the amount of cuts and hay per year. Mr. Marcoux asked if on person hays 1,2,3 times per year for 3000 bales, the farm gets 1000 bales and \$6,000 in sales of surplus, the cost of getting the fields maintained is \$6,000 per year. Equipment maintenance costs are not our concern. How does this differ from someone else charging us \$6.00 per bale?

Mr. Taub said that essentially the town is subsidizing the farm at \$6,000 per year.

Mr. Scanlon said in the past they relied on the executive director of the farm to handle these matters. She didn't and that is now going to change.

Mr. Taub said this process needs to be transparent. It needs to have an open bid process.

Mr. Scanlon states that years ago the farm had a manure spreader to take care of the maintenance itself. It no longer has the equipment.

Mr. Quinn asked what is the definition of an "open bid process". Mr. Taub said it should have three bids.

Mr. Scanlon said if it has to go out to bid now, Mr. Welch will not spend any money fertilizing the fields now.

Mr. Jones state the need to do soil tests to determine a base line of the soils and what needs to be done to the fields to keep them healthy.

Mrs. Elmer provided a synopsis of discussion so far.

1. Hay east side of Joppa Hill Road
2. Brush hog encroachment of fields
3. Spread wood ash or other suitable organic fertilizer
4. Require a once a year soil test.

Mr. Taub said that the Conservation Commission would pay for the soil tests. Mr. Scanlon again stated how helpful the coop-ext in Milford has been and to look to them for guidance.

Mr. Marcoux asked if we have resolved who will be responsible for haying the 75 acres of fields. Mr. Scanlon said he will do a 3-5 year agreement with Mr. Welch and at the end of that period will put out to bid. Mr. Marcoux stated that since this land is owned by the town it should be an "open bid process". It does not have to be an RFP. Just get three farmers to give you a bid.

Mike will like to propose a 3-5 year contract with Mr. Welch. Mr. Taub said 3 years is OK. Mrs. Elmer stated the contract should include fertilizing and an out if not in compliance. Mr. Marcoux asked if the farm didn't hay the fields, who would?

Mr. Taub said the town and the parks and recreation department.

Summary of meeting.

- Karin Elmer to draw up an easement/license with owners of land on

No. Amherst Rd.

- Karin Elmer shall finalize an agreement with the Town of Amherst to maintain the small field adjacent to Amherst field.
- Education Farm will resolve the easement terms as to who is responsible for the care and maintenance of the 75 acres of fields and revise the agreement thereof.
- Educational Farm to enter to a written contract with Mr. Welch for the current maintenance of the fields.

Respectively submitted by,

Karin Elmer

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